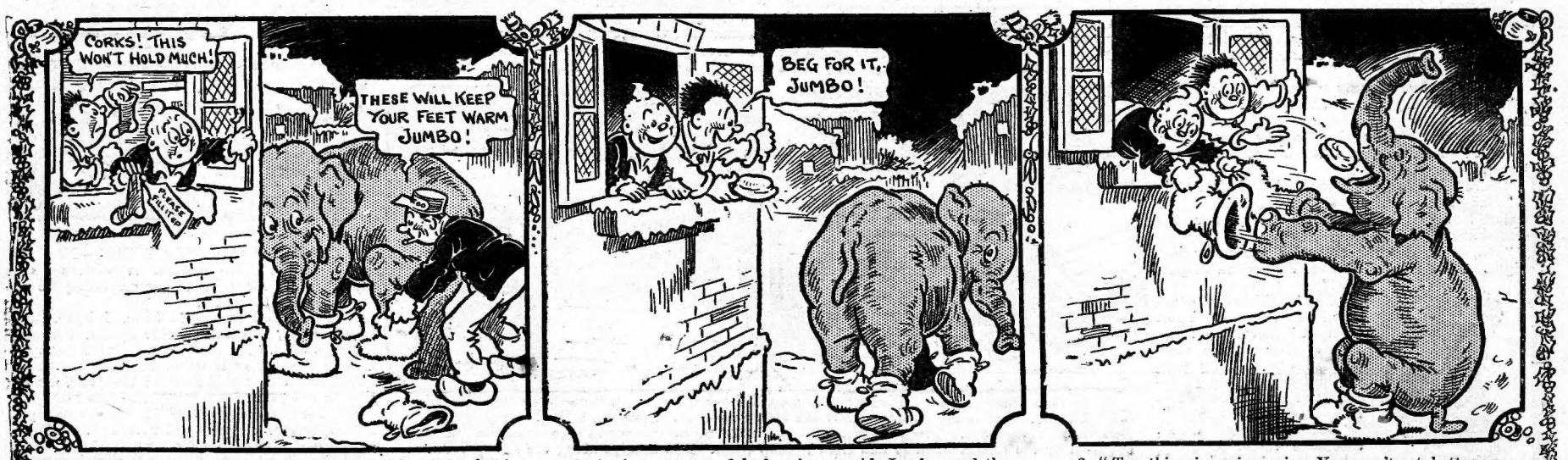
COMIC CUTS 1D. EVERY MONDAY

Full of Christmas Joke-Crackers.

[NUMBER 2,224.]

The Merry Christmas Pranks of Jackie and Sammy, the Terrible Twins.

[DECEMBER 31, 1932.]



1. "Well, we want Father Christmas to 'foot' the bill," quoth Jackie on Christmas Eve, "but it's a pity we haven't got bigger feet. There's only room for a hole in our socks!" But just about then Sammy saw Uncle Tom fitting—

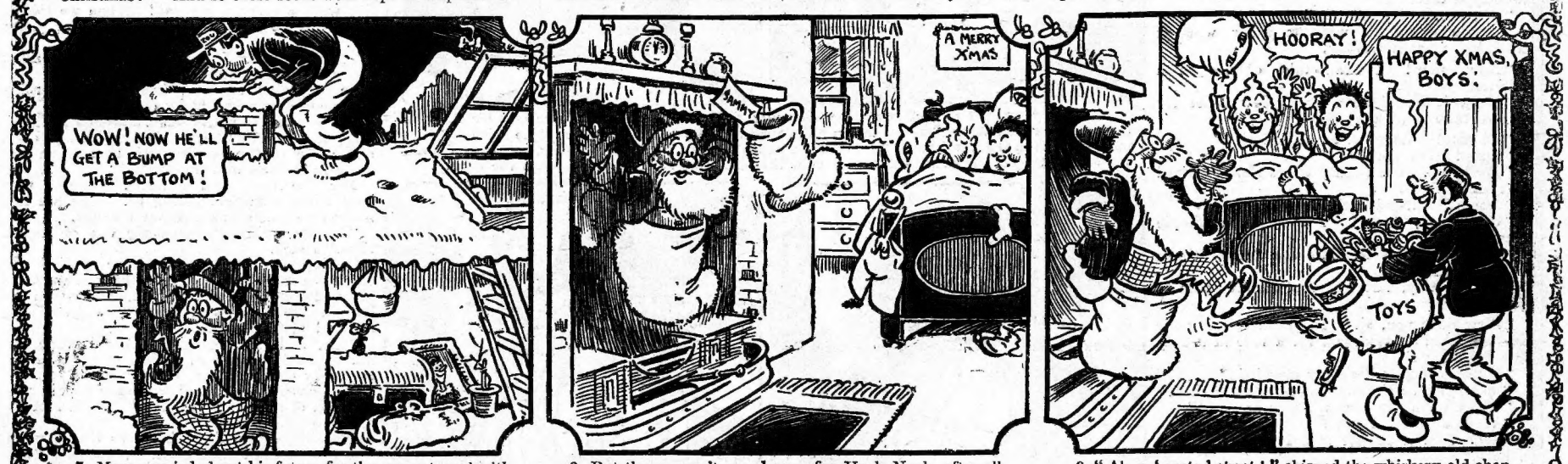
2. A nice cosy set of bed-socks on old Jumbo, and the fair-thatched nipper got an idea. "There's room for thought here!" he smoled. "Ay, and room for something else!" lisped his likewise knowingly. "Here you are, Jumbo—

3. "Try this nice mince pie. You won't get better anywhere." "No, we made it ourselves!" sniggered Sammy. "'Yule' enjoy it, I bet!" And as Jumbo begged for it like so, Sammy slyly helped himself to two of those hefty socks.

4. "Whoopee! Now we shall give old Santa a real chance to be generous!" sang Sammy. "Yes, I always believe in giving a fellow a chance," yummed Jackie, "'specially at Christmas!" And so those socks were kept in suspense.

5. Meantime, jolly old Uncle Tom had rounded up Uncle Noah and persuaded him to play Daddy Christmas. "That face fungus of yours is just the thing for the part!" said the old zoo minder. So Noah stood on the chimney—

6. And all went well—especially the presents!—till the silly old sample got biffed by a big snowball from Jacko. "Waroops! I've lost my balance!" he parped. "And the presents, too!" sniffed Tom. But old Uncle Noah was—



7. More worried about his future for the present, and with a wail of woe he slithered down the chimney. "Corks!" gasped Tom. "I bet the bump won't 'soot' him!"

8. But there wasn't any bump for Uncle Noah, after all. Cos, you see, one of those hefty socks which the twinlets had borrowed from Jumbo neatly caught him in the grate.

9. "Ah, a 'grate' stunt!" chirped the whiskery old chap, "Bring the presents in, Tom—they deserve 'em!" And the twins soon woke up to the fact that their luck was in!

CHIRPY CHAT

"OWP! What do you think you're barging into, clumsy?"

"Oof! Felt like wood to me. Why—so it was!"

"What do you mean? You bumped into my head!"

"Exactly! But you can't see for looking in this snowstorm, can you, Bob?"

"No; but you can feel!"

"Ay! And I'm feeling like a mince pie."

"H'm! You look a bit like one, too! But, tell me, old festive friend, what are the best things to put in a Christmas pudding?"

"Why, your teeth, of course!"

"Ta-hoo! Pray tell me, gentle sir, what art going to give me for Christmas?"

"This family album of mine. Like it?"

"H'm! It reminds me of a china shop."

"Indeed! And why?"

"'Cos it's full of ugly mugs!"

"Rude old fig! For two pins I'd take it back!"

"Don't worry about the two pins, sonny boy; take it! But, say, you know old Cutts, the tailor, don't you?"

"Sure! Awfully absent-minded, isn't he?"

"Not half! He's so absent-minded he ordered a double-breasted turkey for his Christmas dinner!"

"Ha, ha! I went out with the waits last night. Four of us were over six feet in height, too!"

"Where's the good fairy?"

"Coo! Nobody could complain of short 'weight' there."

"No. But we soon complained of the long wait we had for a drop of reward! Nobody seemed to like the carols we sang."

"Maybe they didn't recognise them."

"Rude fellow! If you're not careful I shall treat you like a Christmas pudding."

"How's that?"

"I shall 'cut' you!"

"Jolly good! Dost know why it is that children object to the absence of Santa Claus?"

"No. Why?"

"'Cos they prefer his 'presents'!"

"Too smart! How did you enjoy your stay at Bumpington last week-end?"

"I didn't!"

"Oh! Is that where you got rheumatism?"

"No. I got it in my leg!"

"Desist, pard! But, say, what a curious handle you've got to your walking-stick. What is it?"

"It's a dog made of ivory."

"Oh! How often do you feed it?"

"Whenever it barks!"

"Phew! I can see you've been sharpening yourself up for the Christmas party. And that remembers me; what role would you like to take in our little Christmas play?"

"I'll take a sausage roll, with a bit of pud to match!"

"Greedy old grabber! But, tell me, what's that hefty parcel you've got tucked under your arm?"

"That's a horse for my young nephew."

"Gee!"

"No. Gee-gee!"

"Chump! How much does a toy horse of that type cost?"

"Oh, about fifty pounds."

"Apple sauce! I want to know what it costs, not what it weighs!"

"Now, now! I shall take offence in a minute."

"Well, it would be a pretty low fence for you to take it on that nag!"

"Fainits! Art good at arithmetic?"

"Sure! Try me!"

"Well, what are twenty times nine hundred and ninety-nine?"

"Ahem! I'll leave that one to you!"

"Oh, come, come! It's quite a simple question."

"Ay, I know it is. It's the answer that's troubling me."

"By the way, hast got that car of yours to go yet?"

"How dare you, sir! It's been running for weeks. Didn't I take you for a ride in it only last Saturday?"

"Ride? Why, we simply crawled!"

"Then you should have got out and walked."

"Oh, I wasn't in such a hurry as that!"

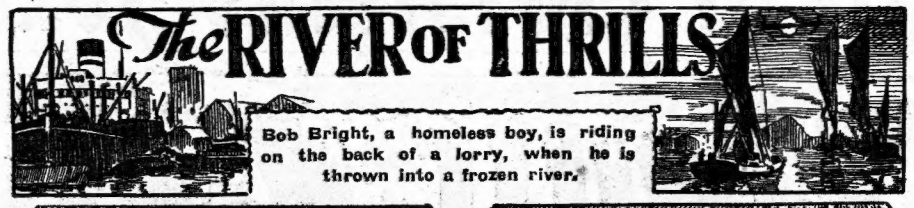
"Well, anyway, I got arrested for speeding yesterday. The copper said I was going like a hare."

"Ah! Made 'game' of you—eh?"

"Well, I wasn't 'jugged.' anyhow! And now I'll give you the mistletoe 'bow.' Happy Christmas, old cracker!"

"Same to you with holly fittings!"

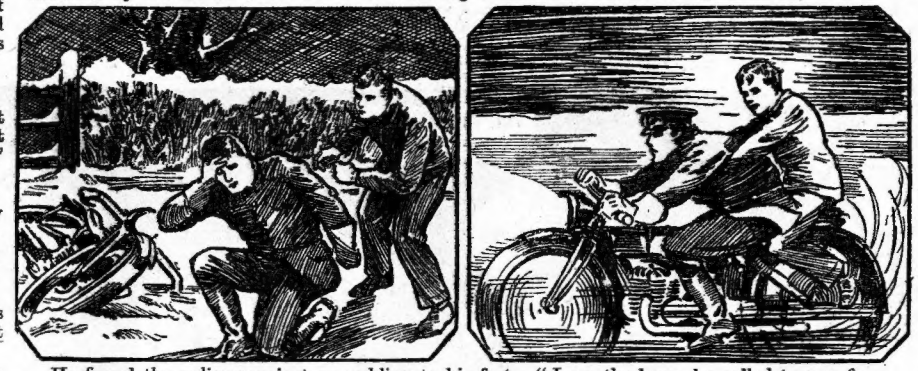
The RIVER OF THRILLS



Bob Bright, a homeless boy, is riding on the back of a lorry, when he is thrown into a frozen river.

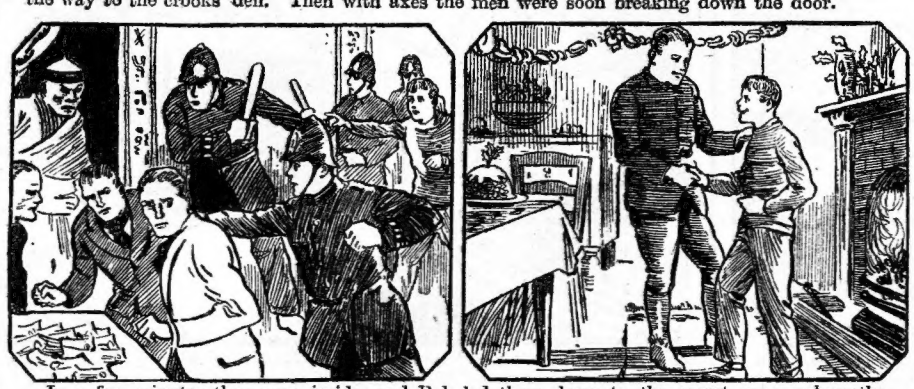
When Bob had been hiding on the back of the crooks' lorry it had skidded on the slippery road, run through a hedge and plunged into an ice-covered stream. The rogues had managed to jump out just in time, and they made off, not seeing Bob thrown into the water with some of the cases. Clinging to the case, Bob found a rope in it and quickly made a lasso of it.

Twice Bob threw the rope towards a tree on the bank, and each time the strong wind blew it back again. But at the third attempt the loop caught on a branch, and after much pulling Bob hauled himself out. His first thought was for the motor policeman who had been knocked senseless by the crooks when he had tried to stop them. Bob hurried along the snowy road.



He found the policeman just scrambling to his feet. "I am the boy who called to you from the back of the lorry," he said. Then Bob explained all, and told of the smuggled goods on the ship and of the crooks' den in the warehouse. "Just the news we want!" cried the officer. And, finding his machine undamaged, he and Bob were soon mounted and racing to the town.

When they reached the police station Bob was taken inside, and there he told his story to the surprised inspector. "Why, they are the very men we are looking for!" he cried. "You must take us to the warehouse!" Quickly a police van was filled with officers, and Bob showed the way to the crooks' den. Then with axes the men were soon breaking down the door.



In a few minutes they were inside, and Bob led them down to the secret room, where the startled Li Yen and his gang were caught with some of the smuggled goods. They were arrested and taken to prison. Constable Gates made a great friend of Bob and invited him to spend a jolly Christmas with him. And, what made Bob delighted, work was found for him to do!

Starts next week:— "MICK OF THE MOUNTED!" —Exciting New Picture Story.

MY CORNER

COMIC CUTS Office, 162, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London. E.C.4.

MY DEAR CHUMS,—I would like to wish everyone of you a real Merry Christmas and heaps of presents and jolly fun.

In our next issue, which will be on sale on Monday, as usual, you will find a very thrilling new story in pictures, entitled, "Mick of the Mounted!" Our other fine features will be absolutely tip-top, so mind you give an order for COMIC CUTS to-day.

Wishing you all the fun,

Your old friend,

CLARENCE CUTS.

By Ginger!

Our Office Boy's Saucy Chat

DEAR FELLOW FEASTERS,—Now that the Festive Seezun is with us once agane, I take this opportunity to ask you a question.

How are you feeling? Fine, I hope. And how are you feeding? Same agane, I hope.

Now that we have got into conversashun and broken the ice, as it were, which is a commun happening about this time of the yeer, I wood like to tell you about my Christmas doings.

It all started with Tilda Tabbs, my best girl-friend, having a party and inviting all the best of the eye-class Biffins Cort nayberhood.

Philpot Bottles, the "Chips" offis-chump, was there, of course. Not because he's eye-class, or anything like that, but 'cos his girl Sharlot Scroggins is a friend of Tilda's.

Natcherally, Tilda was the bell of the ball, so to speak, and before the fite—I mean, tea—er—started, she gave me a few instruckshuns.

"See that everybody gets two helpings of everything, Sebastian," she says. "Don't be afrade to press the food on peepul, 'cos there's plenty."

"All rite," I ansered.

But I think I shood have kept my mouth shut and then I woodn't have put my foot in it.

I notissed that Sharlot had just finished her ninth mince-pie and still looked hungry, so I politely popped up to her.

"Sharlot," I says, "may I press you to a jelly?"

"Don't you dare try to squash me to anything!" she cried, mistaking my meaning.

And I was just recovering from the playful wallop on the ear she gave me, when Tilda started handing some crackers round.

Me and Charlie Cherrytop were lucky, 'cos we got a cupple each.

"Tell you what, Charlie," I says, "you help me pull mine, and I'll help you pull yours."

But befour we cood get busy, Philpot chipped in.

"I no," he says. "Both of you shut your eyes wile you pull and you'll have a nice serprize when you find who's got the lucky charm or paper hat."

"Rite-ho!" agreed Charlie.

So we closed our peepers and pulled. Bang! But what a serprize we got! When we looked there was no sine of a lucky charm or paper hat.

"That's queer," I says. "Maybe that cracker was a dud with nothing in it."

So we tried another, but the same thing happened agane—no lucky charm!

But what I did notiss was a smile on Philpot's face, so me and Charlie chatted things over, and come to the conclooshun that there was more in it than met the eye!

For the next two minnits, we got very busy without Philpot seeing us. Then we told him to watch us pull another cracker.

"Maybe we'll get sumthing out of it this time," I says.

Closing our eyes agane, we pulled the cracker—and what do you think happened? Why, Philpot let out a yell, and when we looked, there he was holding a grate big handful of black soot.

"'Ha, ha!" I laughed. "That'll teach you not to hold your hand underneath and sneak the lucky charms out of our crackers!"

Yes, chums, it was a branewave on my part to think of filling up that cracker with soot out of the chimbley!

But things weren't as black as they seemed, 'cos when Philpot had spent ten minnits scrubbing his hand clean, we all piled in, and didn't we have sum fun!

Merry Christmas everybody!

Trooly yours,

SEBASTIAN GINGER.

31-12-32

Marsh Wood Inn

The Thrilling Tale of a Hunted Father and His Son, and of the Secrets of the Tavern of Mystery!

Still locked together, the fighting men came hurtling down the whole flight of stairs!

The Christmas Plot.

IT was Christmas Eve, and the gloomy old inn on the outskirts of Marsh Wood looked less forbidding than usual, for its ugly shape was draped with snow. Snow lay over the countryside, and it was frozen so hard by the intense cold that even the heaviest footstep left no imprint upon it.

The moon was shining brightly and the stars glittered like frost points in the sky. There was no wind, nor was there any sign of a moving thing on the road outside the inn. The whole scene seemed to have been frozen into lifelessness.

Within the inn a fire was burning itself out in the big grate, and before the dying fire stood the villainous innkeeper, Old Scudd. With him were Ned, Job, and Dave Burch, the three brothers, who were also Old Scudd's partners in crime.

And amidst the peace and quiet of that frozen night the crooks were planning their latest robbery.

"It should be a very merry Christmas for us all if everything turns out well," chuckled Old Scudd, rubbing his fat hands together. "The fancy-dress party at Bardun Hall should mean a good night's work."

"Tell us all about it, Scuddy," said Burch. "We've got the general idea, but it'll be just as well to get the details clear. The main notion, of course, is that as the owner of Bardun Hall has invited everybody in the neighbourhood to his Christmas Eve party, we shall abuse his hospitality by robbing him of anything we can lay our hands on."

Old Scudd raised his hands in an expression of mock shock.

"Really, Ned, I wish you wouldn't put it that way. It sounds horrible," he said. "On the other hand, as Sir George Bardun has thrown open his house for the night, he deserves all the trouble he gets. His main trouble to-night will be the loss of the family necklace of diamonds, which he very foolishly keeps in his bed-room."

"The necklace is supposed to be worth a fortune," said Job Burch.

"So much the better," gloated Old Scudd. "It will make a nice Christmas present for us all. I should like to make you all a present at this happy season, but I propose to do it to-night at somebody else's expense."

"Spout out the facts, Father Christmas," jeered Ned. "All that we know, so far, is that three of us are going to a party in fancy dress. I'm going as Robin Hood, Job's going as Captain Kidd, the pirate, and you're going as Friar Tuck."

"Masked," added Old Scudd. "Everybody has to go masked, and stay masked until twelve o'clock. That suits our plan admirably, because, in case anything should go wrong, we don't want to be recognised."

"A mask won't do much to hide that fat paunch of yours, Scuddy," remarked Ned Burch cheerily.

Old Scudd snarled.

"I shan't be the only plump man there—not by a dozen or more," he retorted. "And I don't want any of your rude remarks, in any case," he added. "Just keep your ears open and your mouth shut while I explain what you've all got to do."

He paused, and a frown creased his round face.

"As soon as I close the inn, at ten, we'll dress in our costumes and go to the hall," he said. "Dave will hide in the grounds, and at a quarter to twelve he will startle everybody by setting off half a dozen loud crackers. When the folks go to the windows the lights will go out, because you, Ned, will at that time be at the main switch."

"What about the necklace?" growled Job Burch.

"I'll see to that!" answered Old Scudd. "As soon as the lights go out I'll be up the stairs and after the jewels. Should the lights come on too soon you, Job, will drop a smoke bomb to add to the confusion. That's the plan, and I don't think anything can go wrong with it."

"If it does we shall be pretty badly placed," said Ned. "One false step, and we shall finish up in——"

He ceased speaking as the click of the latch caused them all to look towards the door. The door opened slowly and into the bar-parlour came a tall, lean figure, clad in scarlet. Tights covered the newcomer's legs, a short scarlet cloak hung from his shoulders, and a red cap, with a scarlet feather, was upon his head. He had a small, pointed beard and stiletto moustache.

"The devil!" gulped Old Scudd.

The newcomer smiled and beckoned to them.

"Aha! I want you all!" he said softly. "I've come to collect you!"

Old Scudd gibbered, but Ned Burch quickly realised that he and his companions had for a moment allowed their nerves to make fools of them.

"It's that film actor, Forbes!" he cried.

"Of course it is!" answered Philip Forbes. "Who did you think it was?"

Old Scudd choked back his rage.

"What's the idea of coming here like that?" he demanded.

"I'm going to the party," answered Forbes. "I thought perhaps you would be going, too, so I came along in the car to see if I could give you a lift."

"If we want to go to the party," cried Ned savagely, "we can go in our van, which is outside."

"Yes, I saw it," said Forbes. "Going in the van are you? Well, I hope you don't find yourself in the cart. Cheerio!"

And he went as suddenly as he had come.

"He's a fool!" cried Ned Burch.

"I wonder!" murmured Old Scudd, scratching his fat chin.

When Darkness Came.

THE spirit of Christmas has a remarkable effect upon the minds of most people. It helps them to forget their troubles and their fears, and in most cases causes them to have more kindly feelings towards those who may have distressed them.

For some weeks before this Christmas Eve a convict had been at large in the neighbourhood of Marsh Wood, and the honest folk of the district had naturally been scared. They had heard terrible stories of the convict, and they had heard even more dreadful accounts of the behaviour of the convict's son.

They believed that Morton Hunter, the convict, and Nick Hunter, his son, had robbed a mail van and killed the driver. They believed that Hunter and Nick had been guilty of other violent robberies. They did not know that the convict father and his son were innocent of any crime at all. They did not know that both were the victims of Old Scudd's villainies.

On this Christmas Eve the people living in the neighbourhood of Marsh Wood had put all thought of the Hunters out of their mind, and at the invitation of Sir George Bardun they had all gathered at Bardun Hall for the fancy-dress ball.

The ball-room presented a gay scene. It was decorated in true Christmas style with streamers, garlands, balloons, holly, and mistletoe. The balcony at the far end, which could be reached by means of a broad stairway, was a smother of holly, in the midst of which gleamed small electric lights of different colours.

There were about fifty people present, and this meant very nearly the entire population of the local countryside. All of them were in fancy dress, and the effect was as picturesque and as jolly as anybody could wish.

Costumes of all periods and all countries were being worn, and as all of the people were masked, there was plenty of fun as the merrymakers tried to guess the identity of each other.

It was exactly eleven o'clock when Philip Forbes, in his scarlet costume, moved across to a highwayman, who was talking to a boy, dressed as a jockey.

"Seen anything suspicious yet, Hunter?" he asked quietly.

"No," answered the highwayman. "I have had a good look round among the visitors, but I've seen nothing to make it seem that Old Scudd's bandits are planning a raid."

"They may not care to take the risk," said Forbes. "If they do, I think we can fix them and put a stop to their pleasant evening." He chuckled. "My aunt! I wonder what the revellers present would do if they knew they had an escaped convict bobbing about amongst them."

Nick Hunter, dressed as a jockey, had been looking around the room during the past few seconds, and he suddenly caught Philip Forbes by the arm.

"There are two Friar Tucks here this evening," he whispered. "I'm certain that one of them is Old Scudd. One of them is standing at the foot of the stairs, and the other is talking to a pierrot near the band."

Forbes quickly picked out the two figures. In form the two men were exactly alike, and wig, make-up, and mask made it quite impossible to tell which was which.

"They're as much alike as two pigs," remarked Forbes. "Either of them might be our innkeeper friend, so it will be a good idea to watch both. I'll keep an eye on the friar by the band, and you can watch the jovial monk by the stairs, Hunter. Have you been able to pick out the brothers Burch, Nick?"

"That fellow dressed as a pirate chief might be Job Burch," answered Nick. "I can't be certain, of course, but his slow, lurching walk is very much like Job's."

"Then you can keep an optic on him," declared Forbes. "And I think we'd better pretend to join in the revels. We might as well pull a few crackers and bust a few balloons so as to look as though we're having a time of our lives."

At this moment the band struck up, and the majority of the merrymakers joined in a rollicking dance. Forbes and Friar Tuck joined in, but the man whom Morton Hunter was watching remained tapping his feet to the time of the music and apparently enjoying himself thoroughly.

For an hour the party continued in tip-top form, and by that time all troubles were forgotten in the joy of the Christmas fun. Nick Hunter was young enough to feel the thrill of the revels, and for the first time since tragedy had come into his life he was able to feel reasonably happy.

At precisely a quarter to twelve, when the fun was at its height, the drama began.

The band had just finished playing a lively tune when from the grounds outside three loud explosions sounded!

Instantly there were cries of alarm, and a rush was made for the windows. Then with a suddenness which was almost frightening, every light in the room went out!

Turning the Tables.

FOR an hour past, Morton Hunter, in his highwayman costume, had been keeping a close watch upon the bulky figure of his own Friar Tuck, and at the moment the lights went out the gowned monk was standing near the foot of the stairs running up to the balcony.

In the darkness Hunter just glimpsed the burly figure moving quickly up the stairs, and he followed, the sound of his footsteps being completely drowned by the cries of the alarmed people in the ball-room.

He saw no more of the friar until he reached the top of the staircase. His quarry had passed beyond the balcony into a corridor which was lighted by the bright rays of the moon coming in through a tall window at the far end.

Hunter drew into the deep shadows and watched the friar whom he believed to be Old Scudd make for the closed door of one of the rooms leading from the corridor. From the ball-room came a pandemonium of noise which was well suited to the villainous innkeeper's desperate plan, for without hesitation he hurled himself at the locked door.

At his first weighty charge the lock broke, and Old Scudd went tumbling into the room. He came out fifteen seconds later holding a diamond necklace, which glittered brilliantly in the light of the moon. For a moment he feasted his beady eyes upon it, and then he dropped it into the loose pocket of his gown.

He came back towards the balcony, but just before he reached it he found himself confronted by the tall figure of the masked highwayman, and before he could recover from his startled surprise his own mask was whipped from his face.

"At last, Scudd! You're caught red-handed at last!" cried Hunter.

Like a trapped beast Old Scudd bared his teeth in an ugly snarl. Then, with the agility of a leaner and younger man he sprang at Hunter. The two closed in a fierce embrace which neither intended to relax.

With the strength of a gorilla, Old Scudd sent the highwayman crashing against the wall, but next moment he was himself forced backwards, and the struggling men went staggering out on to the balcony of the ball-room.

The room was now dimly lighted by moonlight, for the heavy curtains before the window had been flung back. The revellers were standing in groups talking and laughing excitedly, for it had been discovered that the explosions in the gardens had been caused by fireworks, let off no doubt as a joke.

Up to now, the balcony remained in darkness, and the people below had no idea of the fierce struggle which was taking place above them. But they were not left very long in ignorance, for a second later the lights were switched on again and the struggling men were revealed to all.

Old Scudd's face was purple, and as the lights came on he entirely released his grip upon Hunter. The convict believed then that the fight was over, but he was wrong, for next moment the innkeeper's strong arms were about him once more.

Towards the head of the staircase the fighting men reeled, and then, still locked together, they came hurtling down the whole flight, to crash in a struggling heap at the bottom.

Then they parted, and breathless and bruised they rose to their feet. Old Scudd, who had been underneath in the final fall, tottered helplessly, and would have fallen had not Sir George Bardun caught him.

"What's the meaning of this brawling?" demanded Sir George indignantly. "Have you selected my house on Christmas Eve to settle a squabble of your own, Scudd?"

With all his strength Morton Hunter helped Black Betty gain the bank.

The innkeeper could not answer, for he had been too badly shaken by his fall.

"It's not exactly a squabble, sir," answered Morton Hunter. "This man has made an attempt to rob you, and I have been able to prevent him from carrying out his plot. When the lights went out I caught a glimpse of him bolting up the stairs. I followed him and saw him smash open the door of a room upstairs. After that I saw him come from the room with a necklace in his hand."

Philip Forbes edged his way forward.

"Looks like a carefully arranged plot, sir," he said. "Your servants have just reported that the lights went out because they were turned off at the main switch!"

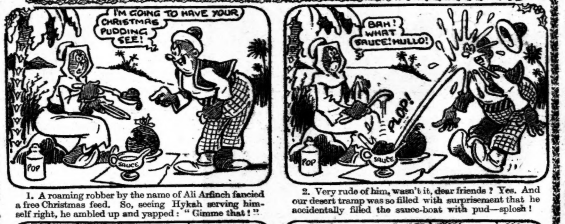
"Great powers!" gasped the outraged owner of Bardun Hall. "Then this man Scudd had an accomplice. What have you got to say for yourself, Scudd, before I send for the police?"

Old Scudd by this time was recovering both his breath and his wits.

"Yes," he said, "you'd better send for the police, but first you might take the mask off that highwayman's face. Then perhaps you won't be so ready to believe the story which he has told you."

(Continued on page 6.)

HYKAH THE ARAB TRAMP AND HIS CAMEL HAIRBRUSH.....


I'M GOING TO HAVE YOUR CHRISTMAS PUDDING I SEE!
BAH! WHAT SAUCE! MULLO!
TAKE THIS AND THAT YOU BAD OLD EGG!
CLANG!
THREE FEET MAKE ONE YARD TWO FEET MAKE ONE SCALE HERE GOES FOR A FEED!
POP

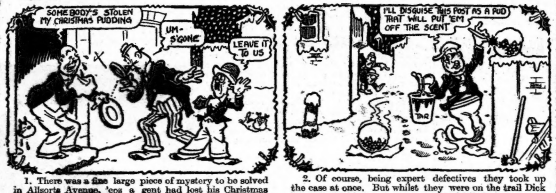
1. A roaming robber by the name of Ali Arfinch fancied a free Christmas feed. So, seeing Hykah serving himself right, he ambled up and yapped: "Gimme that!"

2. Very rude of him, wasn't it, dear friends? Yes. And our desert tramp was so filled with surprisement that he accidentally filled the sauce-boat with pud—splosh!

3. "Oosh!" parped Ali Arfinch. "I don't want sauce!" "No; you've got too much already!" warbled Hykah. "Here's a Christmas 'cracker' for you!"

4. And having socked the saucy sample on the summits, our happy old hero performed a great "feet" by turning Ali into a table, thusly beating him all ends up.

BARREL AND LARDY THE COMICAL TECS



1. There was a fine large piece of mystery to be solved in Allsorts Avenue, 'cos a gent had lost his Christmas pudding. "Stolen, lads!" he wailed to Barrel and Lardy.

2. Of course, being expert detectives they took up the case at once. But whilst they were on the trail Dick Duff, the bad lad, was up to a colourful little caper.

3. Yes, he painted a round stone ball on a wall to look like a pud, and when our pair spotted it they jumped to conclusions and jumped up to grab it. M'm!

4. "Aha! We've found the pudden!" chirped Lardy. "It'll do as evidence. We'll stick to it!" And they did, too, when they found it was covered in tar!

5. "Coo!" cried Barrel. "It's a black outlook!" But in their efforts to get their hands unstuck off came the stone ball, and the bad lad stopped it! Bonk!

6. "Ha, ha!" chuckled Lardy. "That's bowled him out first ball!" And the pudding owner was so pleased with our pals that he invited them in to a fine feed!

BIG BEN AND LITTLE LEN

AH! NOT MUCH ROOM FOR SANTA-CLAUS DOWN THIS CHIMNEY!
HO HO! LEN STILL BELIEVES IN FATHER TOMAS!
ANYWAY I'D BETTER PUT THE FIRE OUT, IN CASE HE SINGES HIS WHISKERS!
BARG! JUST FOR THAT I'LL HAVE YOUR BIG STOCKING TO HANG UP!
BEN

1. Little Len didn't take any chances, so he measured the chimney to make sure Santa-Claus could get down. And down below Big Ben cackled fit to bust!

2. "Ho, ho!" boomed the big boy. "Fancy thinking anything's coming down there!" Something did, and Ben felt more." put out" than the fire!

3. "Gerlubble-ulp!" he gulped. "Did I give you a surprise?" tweeted Len. "For two pins I'd give you socks!" hooted Ben. "I'll take yours instead!"

4. And say-soing, the big boy helped himself to that overgrown stocking which the wee one had bought for the occasion. Then in paddled our pair's pa.

5. When they woke up Big Ben let out a whoop like a Chinese nightingig. "Look at my hefty load!" he yodelled. "I hope I've got what I need!"

6. "I'll say you have, bo!" smoked Len. For pa had presented Ben with washing material to remove the soot from his face. What a black outlook!

THE MORE THE MERRIER.

Lady (who wants lad to leave Christmas party as it is getting very late): "Don't you think your mum and dad must miss you?"
Lad: "Oh, yes! Let's send for them, too!"

A "WHOLE-SOME" COMPLAINT.

Diner: "I say, waiter, this turkey is only half cooked!": "Then eat the half that is cooked, sir!"

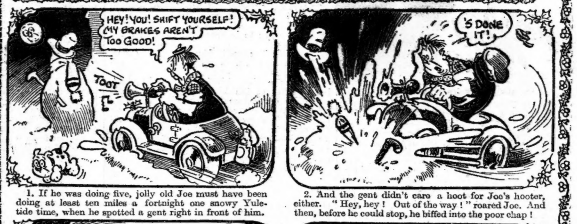
THE WRONG "AD-DRESS."

Pa: "Where are you taking my coat and hat?"
Tommy: "To the kitchen, dad. Ma is now going to dress the turkey for dinner!"

Our Comic Cartoonist is Given a Christmas "Test"!

I HAD JUST SAT DOWN TO MY HUMBLE XMAS DINNER WHEN THE EDITOR PHONED ME UP AND
ASKED ME TO GO TO AUSTRALIA AND
DRAW SOME PICTURES ABOUT THE CRICKET MATCH!
I JUST MISSED THE LAST BUS TO AUSTRALIA
SO I HAD TO GO HOME AGAIN
I COULDN'T GET THINKING ABOUT THOSE SKETCHES
AUSTRALIA SPEAKING! WE WILL NOW APPROACH THE TEST MATCH!
BUT GREAT IDEA! I TUNED IN AUSTRALIA ON MY CRYSTAL SET
AND DREW MY SKETCHES FROM WHAT I HEARD HERE THEY ARE!
ZOUNDS! BOWLED A MAIDEN OVER!
TATECLIFFE WANT OUT FOR A DUCK!
BALLOON OR WINDMILL!
THE CAPTAIN CHANGED HIS BOWLER
IN FRONT OF WICKETS
AND TRIES A LONG STOP
HAMMOND-EGGS WAS IN FOR A CENTURY
BUT WAS FINALLY CAUGHT IN THE LONG FIELD
FIRED!
CHEERING STOPPED
THE BOWLER THEN GOT SOME WICKETS CHEAPLY
OUT FOR A DUCK
THE LAST BATSMAN WAS MISSED!
AND STUMPS WERE DRAWN AT SIX-O'CLOCK
STRANGE! THE EDITOR WASN'T A BIT PLEASED
COMIC CUTS OFFICE
AND TRIED TO RUN ME OUT—BUT I WASN'T CAUGHT!

JOE GREASE THE JOLLY GARAGE MAN


HEY! YOU! SHIFT YOURSELF! MY BRAKES AREN'T TOO GOOD!
TOOT
'S DONE IT!
OW! WHERE IS HE?
WOW! NOW I'VE GOT TO DIG MY CAR OUT!
THANKS FOR CLEARING THE SNOW AWAY!

1. If he was doing five, jolly old Joe must have been doing at least ten miles a fortnight one snowy Yuletide time, when he spotted a gent right in front of him.

2. And the gent didn't care a hoot for Joe's hooter, either. "Hey, hey! Out of the way!" roared Joe. And then, before he could stop, he biffed into the poor chap!

3. Not knowing it was only a snowman, our gay garage man started to dig in the snow for him. "Phew!" he puffed. "Where is he? He's a deep sort of guy!"

4. And then he rumbled that he'd covered up his car! "Wow!" he gasped, nearly swooning. And it was the nimee pies the old dear gave him that revived our chum!

PERCY THE POET IT RHYMES EVERY TIME

1. It was one merry Christmas-time, when Percy thought he'd write a rhyme. And perhaps he might have well succeeded, but he couldn't find the word he needed!

2. "I want a rhyme with HARK!" he spoke. Two laddies thought they'd "cracker" "Joke." "Is LARK the word you want?" they sang, making a Christmas cracker bang!

3. Perce was startled by the din, and spotting a window, leapt clean in. Inside it was as black as ink, and where he was Perce couldn't think!

4. He struck a match to light the dark and looked straight at a great big shark! It was really only stuffed, of course; but Percy yelled till he was hoarse!

5. Then came the keeper with his pup. Perce didn't wait, but leapt straight up. "Is BARK the word?" the laddies cried as Percy quickly hopped outside.

6. From their cracker there arose a spark, which singed the keeper's nose! "Ha, ha!" laughed Percy. "Now I 'nose'!" And SPARK was the word our poet chose. 31-12-32

This Week's Screen Scream: "SOME GOOD POINTS!"

Marsh Wood Inn!

(Continued from page 3.)

Morton Hunter remained quite still.

"Take off his mask, Sir George," leered Old Scudd. "Then you'll know which of us it was that tried to rob you. See, he doesn't seem anxious to show his face, and it's no wonder, for he is Morton Hunter, the escaped convict!"

This announcement caused a sensation. The revellers, feeling safety in their numbers, crowded round, but still the highwaymen made no attempt to remove his mask.

"Take off your mask, sir!" ordered Sir George.

"There's no reason why I shouldn't," said the highwayman. "I've no cause to be ashamed at having exposed Scudd as the scoundrel he is."

He removed his mask, and Old Scudd almost choked with rage and amazement, for the face of the highwayman was not the face of Morton Hunter! Certainly, in the garish light of the ball-room the man could not be recognised as the escaped convict, so skilfully had his face been made up by his friend Philip Forbes, the young film actor.

Sir George turned scornfully upon Old Scudd.

"This man isn't Morton Hunter!" he declared.

Old Scudd spluttered, and near at hand, Job Burch fingered the smoke bomb which he had been told to use if Scudd's plans went wrong. It seemed to Job that the moment of emergency was near at hand.

"I made a mistake," grumbled the innkeeper. "I thought I recognised his voice when I was struggling with him upstairs. But if he isn't a convict, he's a thief. The story he told you is true, except that it should be the other way about. It was I who caught him coming from a room with a necklace in his hand."

Hunter smiled.

"You'd better search in one of those big pockets of his, Sir George," he suggested.

Old Scudd scowled, but he offered no resistance when Bardun dived his hands into his pockets.

"There's nothing there!" announced Bardun, and then it was Hunter's turn to be surprised.

"I'll ask you to be searched, too," said Sir George.

"Certainly," agreed Hunter. "I expect Scudd's managed to drop the necklace upstairs."

Sir George dived his hand into the right-hand pocket of the highwayman's frock-coat and drew out a lace handkerchief. Then he searched the other pocket, and, with an exclamation, drew from it a glittering necklace of diamonds.

Old Scudd had made the most of that brief period of time when he had relaxed in his struggle at the top of the stairs!

Captured!

"I THINK that settles the argument!" remarked Old Scudd.

"It does!" agreed Sir George grimly. "Walters," he called out to one of his servants, "ring up the police."

Morton Hunter remained motionless. He was shocked and dismayed by the way in which Old Scudd had turned the tables on him, and he knew that nothing he could say now would convince Sir George that Scudd had dropped the jewels into his pocket.

He also knew that surrounded as he was by fifty people he had no possible chance of escape.

"I don't know who you are, but you are certainly not a local man," said Bardun. "Just a crook, I suppose, who took advantage of my masked party in order to get into the house and rob me."

"A bit of a dog to come and spoil our evening, too," said Philip Forbes. "What about putting him somewhere safe until the police arrive, and let the folks get on with the fun?"

"Yes. We'll take him to the library," agreed Bardun.

Forbes caught Morton from behind in a businesslike grip.

"Don't struggle," he whispered. "Nick's gone to the switch. Be ready. Stand clear, there!" he shouted, to the crowding revellers.

The crowd parted, and at that moment the lights went out for the second time that evening.

"Ouch!" Forbes gave a cry as though he had been struck. "Look out!" And then he went fighting his way into the crowd in order to add to the confusion.

Yells of alarm filled the room, and then a brief flicker of moonlight came from the windows as the curtains parted.

Morton Hunter had made the most of the chance which Forbes had given him. He was out through the unfastened windows in a flash, and by the time the curtains had been flung back he was speeding across the snow-covered grounds.

Only a few of the revellers made an attempt to follow him, and among them was Philip Forbes, who was anxious to appear most determined to capture the runaway. Old Scudd also joined in because it seemed the best way of adding weight to the story he had told.

Hunter had a lead of a hundred yards when he passed out through the gates, and sped away across the rising countryside beyond. He topped the crest, raced into the shelter of a small wood, and changed his course.

But he could not shake off his pursuers, for he had been clear of the wood less than a minute when he saw them coming after him again. He still believed that he had a chance of reaching his hiding-place, when he saw a mounted policeman away to his left.

The patrol man, of course, knew nothing of what had been happening at the hall, but the sight of one man being pursued by many was enough for him, and he broke into a gallop, with the intention of heading the runaway off.

Hunter turned again, and made for the river, which now separated him from Marsh Wood. The river was frozen over, and the convict believed that if he could reach the wood he would be safe, for a mounted man would be at a disadvantage in the forest of mighty trees and dense undergrowth.

He reached the river, and his heavy boots clanged in a hollow tattoo upon it as he raced across the ice. But his own footsteps were soon drowned by the beating of iron-shod hoofs as the police trooper rode his horse on to the frozen surface of the river.

He reached the opposite bank and clambered on to it. He was racing away to the safety of Marsh Wood when the sound of a splintering crash brought him to a halt.

He turned, and looked back, to see that the ice had given way beneath the weight of the mounted policeman, and that the man and his horse were struggling in the deep water close to the near bank.

Upon the other side the pursuers on foot had come to a standstill, none of them daring to venture on to the ice which was now cracking right across with a sound like machine-gun fire.

Hunter knew that both the policeman and his horse were in peril. The water even at the side was fully fifteen feet deep, and the swirling currents below the surface would certainly drag the man and the animal down unless they were helped by someone on the bank.

And Morton Hunter was the only one there to help them!

He did not hesitate, nor stop to count the cost. He turned back, and, reaching the bank, bent down.

"Throw the reins over the horse's head to me!" he called.

The policeman, who was clinging to the saddle, snatched the reins, and flung them up so that Hunter was able to catch them. Rising to his feet, the convict pulled upon them until he was able to get grip upon the side of the horse's head harness.

"Up, now, my beauty—up!" he urged, for he had recognised the animal as Black Betty, the mare on which he had recently made an escape from the police.

With all his strength he now helped the mare until after five minutes' desperate struggle the policeman was able to scramble ashore and help Hunter in his task. The rest was easy, for, aided by two men, Betty brought her hind legs up underneath her, and gained the bank.

Then, in her terror and alarm, she reared, and before Morton Hunter could get clear of her, one of her hoofs cracked down upon his head and stretched him unconscious on the ground.

Black Betty, the police horse, spent a quiet, restful Christmas Day in her stable, never knowing as she munched her corn, that the man who had saved her from the frozen river then lay unconscious in a prison hospital.

And she did not know that her policeman master was unhappy because it had been his duty to arrest the man who had sacrificed his liberty to save both of them!

(There are many more thrills in the continuation of this fine yarn in COMIC CUTS out on Monday.)

The Ghost of Burnt Gulley!

A Christmas Night "Ghost" That Brought Good Luck!

A small ghostly form, greenish in hue, flashed through the air!

Scaring News!

"CHRISTMAS!" exclaimed Bert Hocking. "It don't seem like it!"

"Shure," agreed his chum, Pat O'Cree, "'tis all wrong having winter in the middle of the summer, bedad!"

Bert laughed.

"Crumbs, it ain't winter down 'ere in Australia," he chuckled.

The pals had left their ship in Sydney, and had worked their way to the "outback," bringing with them blankets, miners' picks, and a few other odds-and-ends. This evening they were encamped in Burnt Gulley, surrounded by blue-gum trees and with the white stars of the Southern Cross blazing in the black sky.

Like many others before them, they had been lured by the vision of gold and opals, but, so far, they had got nothing for all their hard work—except blisters.

True, December was one of the hottest months in Australia, but they had remembered to buy a Christmas pudding and some mince-pies in Sydney ready for the occasion. And they had noosed a wild brush-turkey, whose savour now mingled with the fragrance of the fire.

"Yum, yum!" mumbled Bert Hocking. "What's it to be, matey, leg or wing?"

"Yes, pl'se," Pat nodded; "and a bit of the breast."

Both turned sharply at the sound of footsteps, and three roughnecks, armed with shotguns, marched towards the fire. The chums recognised them for a trio of prospectors known as Mel, Sam, and Ginger, who were encamped half a mile away.

"Hallo, new chums!" Mel greeted. "That turkey and plum pudding smell real bonza!"

"Have some?" invited the two pals generously.

"Thanks," chuckled Mel. "I see you've been digging here?"

"Ay, mate!" Bert answered. "O' course, we don't properly know where to look, but you said that this gulley was the right sort o' place for opals."

"That's right," smirked Mel. "Only look out for the bunyip."

"For the phwat?" Pat exclaimed.

"The bunyip. That's the spook, new chum."

The three roughnecks settled themselves by the feed, and began hacking off lumps of the turkey with their jack-knives.

"Never heard of old Ben Murdoch?" Mel inquired. "He was an old opal digger, not that he ever found much to sell to those Hebrew dealers in Wallaroo. He died in Burnt Gulley, and every Christmas night there's a bunyip comes and haunts this place."

"Ay," smiled Sam, "and they say that where the bunyip stops, there's a big vein of opal-bearing rock—the stuff that old Ben was a-looking for when his skull was cracked by a boomerang."

"Faith, 'tis a good Christmas ghost story, boys!" Pat remarked. "But what about serving me and Bert wid a bit of turkey?"

"You'll get some," Mel chuckled, "if there's any left!"

With peculiar brutality at this Yuletide season of good will, the burly bullies had come to rob them of their Christmas dinner.

"Haw, haw, haw!" Mel laughed. "Pull this with me, Sam; it's the wishbone!"

"And here's the knuckle-bone, ye spalpeen!" Pat hooted.

Crack! His left hooked round and caught Mel full on the nose.

Then the three miners left their Christmas dinner for a space to deal with the situation—and Bert and Pat found themselves in the thick of it!

"A fight is it?" whooped Pat joyously. "C'mon, then!"

Bert was hardly less handy with his fists than the fighting Irishman himself.

A right swing from Bert hurtled Ginger among the embers, and the big prospector leaped up amid sparks, and danced round with smoke wreathing from his coat-tail.

Clump! A blow from the butt of Sam's shotgun spreadeagled the English fellow upon the soil, and Pat leaped in to beat a tattoo on the roughneck's ribs with alternate jabs.

"Hold there, you mad Irish pommy!" roared Mel. "Stop, or I'll fill you as full of holes as a miner's sieve!"

The Irish fellow spun round, to see the double-barrelled shotgun pointing to his stomach, and then Sam smashed a cowardly right to his chin, and dropped him beside the limp form of Bert.

After that the roughnecks finished the turkey and the Christmas pudding, dropped the mince pies into their pockets, and ambled back to their own camp.

Slowly Bert sat up and shook himself. Dazedly he threw some hot water over Pat in mistake for cold, but it had the desired effect of rousing his pal.

"Well, matey," Bert mumbled, "after all, Christmas comes but once a year."

"Thank hivens," Pat groaned. "Shure, though, 'twas a broth of a scrap while it lasted."

"Which wasn't long," moaned Bert, rubbing his head. "Corks! Look over there! Am I seeing things?"

"What's up?"

"It's down there—under the blue-gums! The thing those toughs was talkin' about."

"Sakes alive! The turnyip?"

"Yes—the bunyip!" Bert gulped. "Yow! Look out!"

A small, ghostly form, greyish in hue, flashed through the air, and became motionless near a bush.

"Great Mike!" Pat gasped.

In superstitious alarm, he snatched up a broken eucalyptus branch and flung it at the apparition, and averted his head.

"D-did I hit it?" he croaked.

Bert rubbed his eyes dazedly.

"Dunno," he gurgled. "I heard the branch thud on the ground. Anyway, the bunyip's gone."

"'Tis a lucky thing for us, me boy!" Pat breathed. "The stick must have passed right through that old bunyip and gave it a scare."

"Strikes me, chum," Bert mumbled, "we'd better have our Christmas feed and get under the blankets."

Cold tinned mutton was a poor substitute for roast brush-turkey and plum pudding, and they ate in silence while ever and anon they cast an eye towards the dark shadows of the blue-gums. They neither heard nor saw anything more, however, and slept until about an hour before dawn.

Then Bert was awakened by a vigorous shaking from his Irish pal.

"Hi, me boy!" Pat yelped. "Get up!"

Thinking something was wrong, Bert rolled out, and stood rubbing his eyes in the darkness.

"Has—has it come back?" he choked.

"D'you mean the bunion?" Pat said. "No, there's nothing——"

"You braying jackass!" growled Bert. "If it isn't the bunyip or anything else, what the dickens d'you mean by waking me up at this hour?"

"Why, me boy," Pat exclaimed exultantly, "because I've discovered where there's a whole fortune of opals!"

Bert followed him in amazement towards the trees.

"They're here," Pat said. "Here's where that old bunyip stopped, so the opals must be under there. That's what those free-fisted miners said, wasn't it?"

So the pals set to with their picks.

Clink! In the first lemon light of dawn, Pat's pick struck on something that rang musically.

Frantically they scraped away the grey soil, and Pat lifted a shimmering mass with clay attached to it from the shallow pit.

The lumps of earth fell from it, and, in his hand, was a blue-green ginger-beer bottle!

The pals looked at it in sheepish silence, and suddenly Pat, in disgust, flung it down upon the ground, where it broke into fragments. And there, scattered among the pieces of glass, were more than a hundred perfect specimens of fire-opals, shimmering with pin-points of red, green, blue, and orange.

Gasping with amazement, they dropped on their knees and collected those precious stones which even they, with their small experience, knew were worth two or three thousand pounds. So, before Ben Murdock had died in this gulley, he had buried his collected treasure of gems which he had kept in an old bottle for safety.

Hardly had they stowed the opals in their pockets that Mel, Sam, and Ginger came tramping through the gulley on their way to prospect farther up-country.

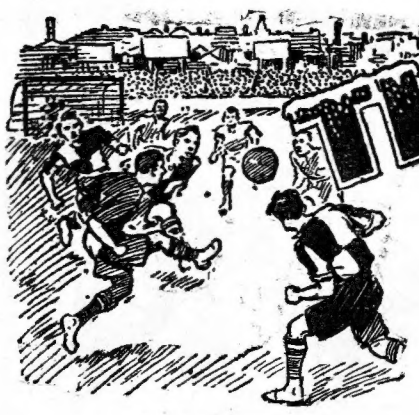
"Digging again, new chums?" jeered Mel. "Haw, haw, haw! We were only kidding you. This here isn't opal-bearing soil at all!"

"See anything of the bunyip?" Sam chuckled.

"Bedad, yes!" Pat panted. "He was like a

(Continued in column 4, page 7.)

31-12-32



THE RED ROVERS

The jolly Christmas Adventures of the Tynecastle Rovers and their comical mascots, Uncle Joe, the well-educated parrot, and William, the almost-human monkey.

Terry waited in the darkness, hoping his plan would work.

Christmas Eve.

"COME on, the Rovers!" yelled the excited crowd which packed the ground on Christmas Eve. "In with it, Rovers!"

The match was between Tynecastle Rovers and Tynecastle City, and feeling was running very high amongst the onlookers. One big ruffian in particular, a well-known supporter of the City, known as Blogger, was yelling insults at the Rovers, and singling out Tom and Terry.

"Couple o' crooks!" he bawled. "They ought to be in gaol!"

Tom and Terry could not help hearing these bellowed insults, but they could not answer them whilst the match was in progress, of course, though the Rovers mascots, Uncle Joe, the well-educated parrot, and William, the almost-human monkey, did their best.

"Look at 'is face!" shouted Joe. "It's like a trod-on Christmas pudden'."

Blogger continued to shout foul insults at Tom and Terry, angered by the fact that the two Rovers were playing brilliant football, and were running round the City defenders. Trapping a centre, Terry slipped the ball to Tom, who kept his feet as a City back came into him, and then scored with a lovely shot.

"Foul! Dirty, Armstrong!" yelled Blogger, as the City back went over. "Turn 'im off! Turn Armstrong off!"

Amidst frantic excitement and an almost continuous din, the match was continued, the Rovers having the measure of their rivals, who were unable to find the net. Then another glorious run by Tom and Terry sent the home crowd into transports of delight, but seemed to make Blogger almost crazy with spiteful anger.

Again and again his booming voice could be heard, shouting insults at the Rovers, and at Tom and Terry in particular, and when Tom scored the third and last goal of the match the ruffian called him a name which caused his face to go white with anger.

"If I get half a chance I'm going to give that merchant something," he said, "and it won't be a Christmas present."

Amidst tumultuous cheering from their supporters, the Rovers ran off, winners by three goals to nil, and Tom changed so quickly that he was out of the ground before the crowd had cleared from the road, for he was hurrying to call on his sweetheart, Elsie Alison.

Suddenly Tom came face to face with Blogger, who had been holding forth on what he called the Rovers' "dirty play," and the rough glared at him.

"There's one of them two rotten crooks!" he shouted.

Tom's eyes flashed, and he went straight at the man and knocked Blogger into a pool of half-frozen slush, which began to ooze down his neck, though he did not know it, for he was completely out.

None of his friends attempted to tackle Tom, who gave them the chance, and then strode on, whilst Blogger lay and soaked himself in the cold and dirty slush.

Terry and the mascots came along later on, to hear what had happened, and to hear, too, that when Blogger was able to move and talk again, he had gone away, muttering threats against Tom and all the other Rovers.

"Nice chap to have a happy Christmas with," chuckled Terry.

As they had done for several years past, the Rovers were giving a Christmas party to a number of poor boys and girls. This year, unfortunately, there was very little money about, and the Rovers could not invite half as many youngsters as they would have liked.

Presently the Irish lad was starting the engine of a borrowed motor-van, and then he was joined by Charlie Richardson, the goalie.

"All the other lads are round at the hall, getting it ready," said Charlie. "I hope we're going to be lucky."

In the van was most of the food for the Christmas party, but Terry and Charlie were going to visit some tradesmen, who had promised to give them something extra.

"Any more fares?" shouted Uncle Joe, as Terry drove the van away.

"Yes, here's one!" said William, in animal talk, and then hit his friend on the beak.

Fog was drifting in patches as Terry visited the shopkeepers who were providing a few gifts for the children, and as he and Charlie came out after paying their last call, a faint breeze swept a wall of mist towards them. Though they did not know it, Blogger and a few of his friends had been watching from a side turning, the rough wondering if there was a chance of getting some sort of revenge on the Rovers. When the mist swirled round the van, he began to whisper swiftly, and then led a rush across the foggy street.

Before Terry or Charlie had a chance to defend themselves, before they even realised they were in danger, they both went sprawling, flung over by brutal blows from behind. On to the van scrambled the roughs, Blogger taking the wheel, for he was able to drive, and in a few seconds the vehicle vanished in the mist.

As it was moving away Terry tried to stand up, but his head was still reeling as the result of the cruel blow he had received, and he sank down again, but not before he had caught a glimpse of the man at the wheel.

"Hi! Help!" shouted the Irish lad, and then struggled to his feet, turned to Charlie, who was still partly dazed, and helped him up.

A policeman ran along, and Terry hastily told his story, saying that he thought he recognised Blogger, but was not sure.

"I can't swear it was him," he said, "but I think it was."

Then a look of distress came over the Irish lad's face as he realised that all the good things intended for the children were gone, and, acting on the impulse, he dodged out to a passing taxi, calling to Charlie to follow.

"What's the idea?" asked the goalie, as the taxi drove away. "Why didn't you get the police busy?"

"There's no time to waste answering questions," answered Terry. "We've got to have a spread for the youngsters to-night, and we might muck about for hours at the police station, since I can't swear it was Blogger. But I'm so sure that I'm going to get the other chaps and go after him. I know where the tyke lives."

Into the gaily-decorated hall ran Terry and Charlie presently, and in a few words the Irish lad panted out his story.

"The kiddies are lining up outside already," he said. "If we're going to give the party we've got to do something mighty quick!"

Looks of dire dismay came over the faces of the helpers, and some of them who had already put on false noses, whiskers, paper hats, and masks, began to remove them.

"Don't do that!" said Terry. "I've been thinking of a way we might get to work. Keep the doings on, and get ready to come out. Listen!"

Hastily he explained his idea, which was that they should get after Blogger, and he proposed that a party should go and sing carols in the street where the ruffian lived.

"If we're dressed up, he won't know who we are," went on Terry, "and if he's about, some of us will be able to follow him."

"But is he likely to go to his home if he helped steal the van?" asked Tom. "There's no telling where he's gone."

"I know!" agreed Terry. "But it's the one place we know of to look for him, and it's the only chance, as far as I can see. Some of us can sing carols in the street, and others can hang about and watch. He might be in his home, and if he comes out, the idea will be for the carol party to sing louder, and those on the watch will be ready to follow him."

As quickly as they could they made their way to the street in which Blogger lived, and then a party, disguised by the false noses, whiskers, and so on, began to sing carols. Terry waited in the darkness farther along the street, desperately hoping that his plan would work; and other Rovers watched from different points.

"Oh, for the mistletoe bough!" sang the carol-party.

"Bow-wow!" warbled Joe, sticking his head out of a big pocket in Terry's overcoat.

But he bobbed back quickly, for William hung out from a pocket on the other side, and reached round, and gave his friend a Christmas-box on the beak.

Suddenly the hearts of the carollers gave jumps of excitement, for from the gloomy entrance of a house near to which they were standing, came Blogger.

"Shove off!" he snarled. "That noise gives me a pain in the neck!"

Instantly the voices of the singers swelled up in greater volume, and the watching lads knew that Blogger was about.

"I reckon you'd be a sight uglier without them things on your faces!" he sneered, and marched away along the street, to be trailed instantly by Terry and several other Rovers.

They kept well in the rear, and the carol party followed, too, as if going to another pitch, whilst Blogger strode on, chuckling to himself.

"The kids will have their knife into the Rovers when they find there's no party for 'em," he said to himself. "I bet Armstrong is jumping mad, and don't know what to do about it."

Quite unaware of the fact that he was being followed, Blogger made his way to a house which formed a meeting-place for the gang he belonged to. The van was in the yard at the back, and all the good things had been carried indoors, and were spread out on a table in the big room which the ruffians entered presently.

"'Appy Christmas, boys!" he said. "And I bet the Rovers will have a rotten one! I'll learn 'em to try to do me down!"

"Who's that singing?" asked one of the crooks; for such they were.

"Oh, it's a rotten carol party!" answered Blogger. "They were in my street just now. If they come outside here, we'll chuck things at 'em!"

Out in the darkness some of the Rovers came creeping along towards the house, whilst the carol party continued to sing. Instantly Blogger and his friends struck up a loud and vulgar comic song, which pleased Joe a lot more than the carols.

"That's the stuff, Billyum!" he said, gazing eagerly at the house. "We're going' to 'ave a 'appy Christmas, after all. Come on!"

There was a small fanlight open above the front door, and Joe scrambled through, followed by his friend, whilst Terry climbed a fence on the other side of the road, and was able to see into the room where the gang was meeting.

"We're on to 'em!" he panted, rejoining his chums. "I spotted some of our things on the table. How can we get in easily?"

"The mascots have got in already!" said an excited Rover.

"'Ere, what price our mates?" asked Joe, as he and William stood in the passage of the crooks' house. "Ain't they comin' in, too? Let 'em in, boy!"

William hesitated, wondering whether to hit his friend for daring to give him orders; and then he heard Terry's whispered voice.

"Open the door, Billyum!"

The crooks continued to sing noisily, and the sound of their raucous voices drowned that made by William opening the door, and then uncle went hopping into the room.

"All together, mates!" he shouted. "Let's make a proper row!"

"How did that parrot get in here?" cried Blogger, jumping to his feet. "This is how he's going out, though!"

With that he ran and kicked with all his might, but uncle dodged very neatly, and the rough overbalanced and fell sprawling in the doorway of the room.

"'Appy Christmas, mate!" said Joe.

But it did not look to Blogger as if much joy was coming his way at present, for he caught sight of Terry and Tom, followed by some of their chums, travelling like a thunderstorm along the passage.

The battle surged on over Blogger, the fighters treading and jumping on him until several police, fetched by neighbours, raced to the house, and then things were sorted out, though Blogger was so mixed up that his friends hardly knew him.

Alas! in the fight many of the good things intended for the children had been hopelessly ruined, and the Rovers did not feel much happiness or triumph in their victory.

"Oy, take your boot out of my mouth, Billyum!" came uncle's voice, from the other side of a partly closed cupboard door. "Keep your 'appy Christmas to yourself, can't you?"

Joe had gone exploring in that cupboard, and had been followed by William, and a fight had begun. Now the door flew open suddenly, and Terry stared inside, his eyes wide open.

"Look at all that silver!" he cried.

The cupboard was packed with the proceeds of burglaries carried out by Blogger and his gang, and handsome rewards were offered for the recovery of some of these goods which Terry was now staring at.

"You'll get that reward money," said a policeman to the Rovers.

And that made things all right, for, knowing they would be able to pay now, Tom and his chums were able to obtain huge supplies of good Christmas fare and gifts, and they brought in ever so many more children to the party, which was a glorious success.

(More thrills and excitement with the Rovers in next week's COMIC CUTS.)

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THE GHOST OF BURNT GULLEY!

(Continued from page 6.)

little grey man, and stopped just here—and then he vanished into thin air."

The three men roared with amusement, and walked on a little way into the bushes until suddenly they stopped, and gave a fresh burst of laughter. In another moment or two they came back, and Mel was dragging behind him a grey form.

"Here's your bunyip!" he laughed. "But he's pegged out now—just an old grey kangaroo!"

The bewildered chums stared at the limp form, and the three roughnecks went on the trail, chuckling over what they considered to be a truly great joke.

Not until a few weeks afterwards when they read in a newspaper of the luck of Bert and Pat in Burnt Gulley, did they realise that the whole Christmas joke had been against themselves!

(Look out for another exciting complete story in next Monday's COMIC CUTS.)

31-12-32

PLUM AND DUFF — THE BOYS OF THE BOLD BRIGADE

1. Colonel Bogey was stirring up the jolly old Christmas pudden, and he caused quite a stir in the camp when he found no money to put in it. "Tut-tut!" said he to Plum and Duff.

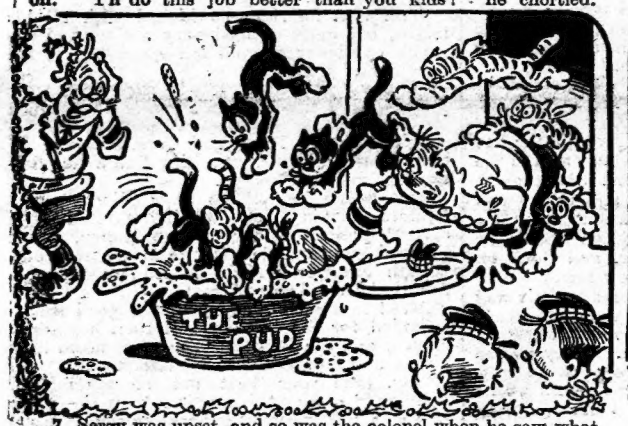
2. "We must have a spot of cash in the pudden to make it nice and rich. Take this two bob and get me eight threepenny pieces." "Yes, sir," piped Plum. "Leave it to little us!"

3. But as they paddled out they found it was snowing harder than they thought, 'cos two hefty lumps smote them. "You take that and I'll take the cash!" sniggered Sergy Suet.

4. And while Plum and Duff were thinking it was "snow" joke the artful ha'porth collared the coin and cantered off. "I'll do this job better than you kids!" he chortled.

5. And not more than two ticks later he was proudly paddling back with a trayful of threepenny pieces—of fish! "They're lovely!" he carolled. "Won't the colonel be pleased?"

6. But a tribe of stray moggies got on the scent of the fish, and in the excitement sergy got tripped up by one of them. And the bits of fish flew into the Christmas pudden.



7. Sergy was upset, and so was the colonel when he saw what had happened. But before Bogey could get really bad-tempered about it those merry moggies hopped into the pudding. M'm!

8. And out they hopped again, covered in pudding mixture. "Wow!" gasped the colonel. "I can't stick that—the pud's all stuck to them! Sergy's led us a dog's life with those cats!"

9. But everything went down well at the feast—except, of course, the Christmas pudding. Sergy got a sentry job to do, but the kind-hearted kids didn't leave him out in the cold!

Christmas with the Merry Midgets of Mannikin Mansions.

1. The merry midgets were hoping to get a few presents for Christmas. "We ought to get a good stock in this stockin'!" laughed Scrubby, as he nailed it in position.

2. But no sooner had the funny flatites fallen asleep when up galloped old Grabb, the landlord. "Tee-hee!" he tittered. "I'll have a cut at spoiling their Christmas!"

3. So saying, he carved a hole in the stocking. But who would have thaw-t it? A sudden thaw had caused a pile of snow to slide inside it and Grabb got the lot!

4. It was all over in a tick, and poor old Grabb was under! So Toffy helped himself to his tuck basket. "Look what I've found, boys!" he cheered. "Merry Christmas!"

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